DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

United States Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes

[FV-97-328N]

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is soliciting comments on its proposal to change the voluntary United States Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes. Specifically, AMS proposes to lower the recommended drained weights for canned sweetpotatoes packed in retail size cans by two percent. AMS has received petitions to revise the United States Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes. The petitioners are requesting a decrease in the recommended drained weight for sweetpotatoes packed in retail size cans including No. 10 cans. The drained weight recommendations would also add No. 300 cans, a size pack which has been increasingly utilized in the industry. These changes would allow more equitable utilization of processed sweetpotatoes across domestic growing regions and will help the sweetpotato industry to meet its market needs.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before [insert date 60 days after date of publication in the Federal Register].

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit their written comments to Karen L. Kaufman, Processed Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 0247, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; faxed to (202) 690-1087; or e-mailed to Karen_L_Kaufman@usda.gov. Comments should reference the date and page number of this issue of the **Federal Register.** The petitions and comments will be made available for public inspection at the above address during regular business hours.

The current United States Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes, along with the proposed changes, are available through the above addresses or by accessing AMS's Home Page on the Internet at: www.ams.usda.gov/standards/vegcan.htm.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karen L Kaufman at (202) 720-5021.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 203(c) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, directs and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture "to develop and improve standards of quality, condition, grade, and packaging and recommend and demonstrate such standards in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices..." The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is committed to carrying out this authority in a manner that facilitates the marketing of

agricultural commodities. The United States Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes do not appear in the Code of Federal Regulations but are maintained by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Copies of official standards are available upon request.

AMS is proposing to change the United States Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes using the procedures it published in the August 13, 1997, Federal Register and that appear in Part 36 of title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR Part 36). Specifically, AMS is proposing to lower the recommended drained weight for sweetpotatoes packed in retail size cans, including No. 10 size cans, by two percent. The drained weight criteria for the No. 300 can, a size pack which has been increasingly utilized in the industry, would also be added. This change would allow a more equitable marketing environment for domestic sweetpotato processors.

AMS received petitions from the Sweet Potato Council of the United States, and the North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission and three processors requesting the revision of the United States Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes.

The petitioners represent a significant part of the canned sweetpotato industry. The Louisiana, Mississippi, and

North Carolina sweetpotato industry provides over half of the sweetpotatoes produced domestically.[1]

The petitions indicate that the recommended drained weights for canned sweetpotatoes packed in retail size cans, as shown in the U.S. Standards for Grades of Canned Sweetpotatoes, are difficult to meet and put sweetpotato processors at an economic disadvantage in marketing these products.

The reasons given for this disparity are that the changes in the varietal types of sweetpotatoes and the growing conditions in the growing regions have changed significantly since the current Recommended Minimum Drained Weight Averages (RMDWA's) were first proposed 21 years ago. Prior to 1985, there were several varieties of sweetpotatoes utilized in canned sweetpotatoes. These varieties were Centennial, Jewel, Gold Rush, and others. Since 1989, the fresh sweetpotato market has predominantly switched to marketing the Beauregard variety because of its improved quality characteristics and yield potential. Surplus sweetpotatoes from the fresh market have traditionally supplied canning operations. Since 1989, processors have noted that the sweetpotatoes they have been using have lower total solids and lower densities than previously used varieties. As part of the industry petition

[1]Source - USDA, NASS, ASB

to review the RMDWA's for canned sweetpotatoes, USDA requested that the sweetpotato industry submit data covering several seasons to provide evidence of this processing condition. Data was collected from plants located in Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina covering several processing seasons.

The petitioners stated that to meet the standard when packing certain newer varieties of sweetpotatoes (i.e. Beauregard), the cans must be over-filled. This condition may cause damage to the sweetpotatoes resulting in downgrading the product, and may have an adverse effect on the integrity of the can seam closure. If the seal's integrity is lost during processing, the product's wholesomeness is jeopardized.

The petitioners contend that a unilateral reduction in drained weight requirements in the grade standard is indicated due to the varietal characteristics of sweetpotatoes currently available for processing.

AMS has reviewed the petitions and data submitted, and has gathered information from government and industry sources. Initial findings do substantiate that there may be a disparity between the drained weights for canned sweetpotatoes processed before 1985 and those processed since the newer varieties have become predominant.

One study showed that in 1989, a producer maintained an average fill weight of 72.8 ounces. The resulting drained weights failed to meet the minimum of 73.0 ounces in only 31 percent of production. By 1995, the average fill weight had been raised to 77.2 ounces, a full 4.2 ounces over the minimum drained weight. Despite this increase, 55 percent of production failed to meet 73 ounces after processing. This overfill not only penalized the processor financially but also threatened product quality and wholesomeness.

AMS is continuing to gather drained weight information on the newer varieties of sweetpotatoes to ascertain an equitable recommended minimum drained weight of canned sweetpotatoes. As an interim measure while further studies are made, AMS proposes to lower the recommended drained weight for sweetpotatoes packed in retail size cans, including No. 10 size cans, by two percent, and add the recommended drained weight criteria for the No. 300 can.

The No. 300 size can was not included in the last revision of the grades standard, but is being added because of the increased usage of this can size. The percentage water capacity, on which the recommended minimum drained weight averages are based, is calculated by dividing the RMDWA by the total water capacity of the container. The drained weight of the No. 300 can is based on the percentage water capacity

available in the No. 303 can, which is very similar in size. As the canning industry has been replacing production of the No. 303 container size with the No. 300 can, it seems appropriate to include the RMDWA for No. 300 cans along with the other drained weight changes in the standard.

A 60-day comment period is provided for interested persons to comment on changes to the standards.

Authority: 7 U.S.C.1621-1627

Dated:

Robert C. Keeney
Deputy Administrator
Fruit and Vegetable Programs

The changes to Table I in the grade standards for Canned Sweetpotatoes are as indicated in brackets as follows:

Table I - Recommended Minimum Drained Weights for Canned Sweetpotatoes

English (Avoirdupois) Weights

Container Designations	Container Dimensions	Regular Pack		Vacuum Pack	
		LL 1/	X_d 2/	*LL* 1/	X_d 2/
		ounces	ounces	ounces	ounces
8Z Tall	211 x 304	[4.8] 4.9	[5.2]5.3	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 2 Squat	307 x 306	[7.5] 7.7	[8.2]8.4	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 300	300 x 407	[8.5]	[9.2]	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 303	303 x 406	[9.5]9.7	[10.3]10.5	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 2	307 x 409	[11.9]12.1	[12.7]13.0	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 3 Squat	404 x 307	[13.6]13.9	[14.7]15.0	[16.3]16.6	[17.2]17.5
No. 2-1/2	401 x 411	[17.6]18.0	[18.7]19.1	. . . . .	. . . . .
No.2-1/2 Tall	401 x 602	[23.0]23.5	[24.1]24.6	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 3 Cylinder	404 x 700	[32.0]32.7	[33.1]33.8	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 10	603 x 700	[69.8]71.2	[71.5]73.0	. . . . .	. . . . .

1/ *LL* means the minimum drained weight for individual sample units.
2/ X_d means the minimum average drained weight from all the sample units in the sample.

Table IA will be as follows with proposed changes in brackets:

Table IA - Recommended Minimum Drained Weights for Canned Sweetpotatoes

(Metric System - Systeme International Units)

Container Designations	Container Dimensions In Millimeters	Regular Pack		Vacuum Pack	
		LL 1/	$\overline{X}_d$ 2/	LL 1/	$\overline{X}_d$ 2/
		grams	grams	grams	grams
8Z Tall	68.3 x 82.6	[136.1] 138.9	[147.3] 150.3	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 2 Squat	87.3 x 85.7	[213.9] 218.3	[233.3] 238.1	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 300	76.2 x 112.7	[242.0]	[262.0]	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 303	81.0 x 111.1	[269.5] 275.0	[291.7] 297.7	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 2	87.3 x 115.9	[336.1] 343.0	[361.1] 368.5	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 3 Squat	108.0 x 87.3	[386.2] 394.1	[416.7] 425.2	[461.2] 470.6	[486.2] 496.1
No. 2-1/2	103.2 x 119.1	[500.1] 510.3	[530.7] 541.5	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 2-1/2 Tall	101.6 x 155.6	[652.9] 666.2	[683.5] 697.4	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 3 Cylinder	108.0 x 177.8	[908.5] 927.0	[939.0] 958.2	. . . . .	. . . . .
No. 10	157.2 x 177.8	[1978.1] 2018.5	[2,028.1] 2,069.5	. . . . .	. . . . .

1/ LL means the minimum drained weight for individual sample units.

2/ $\overline{X}_d$ means the minimum average drained weight from all the sample units in the sample.